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BUSH SAYS CIA INTERROGATION PROGRAM HAS SAVED LIVES WORLDWIDE

In his weekly radio address, president calls upon Congress to approve legislation

Washington -- President Bush said he is working with the U.S. Congress to pass “two vital pieces of legislation” essential to winning the War on Terror that would provide legislative backing to surveillance and CIA interrogation programs.

Speaking in his weekly radio address to the American people September 16, Bush said one bill would authorize military commissions to try suspected terrorists for war crimes, as well as provide “clear rules” for U.S. security personnel involved in their detention and in questioning captured terrorists. The president said the legislation must allow the CIA’s interrogation program to continue.

“The information the Central Intelligence Agency has obtained by questioning men like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has helped disrupt terrorist plots, including planned strikes inside the United States and on a U.S. Marine base in East Africa, an American consulate in Pakistan, and Britain’s Heathrow Airport,” Bush said. “This CIA program has saved American lives, and the lives of people in other countries.” The other bill would modernize U.S. electronic surveillance laws and “provide additional authority for the terrorist surveillance program” designed to quickly monitor communications between Americans and suspected terrorists overseas.

“The principle behind this program is clear: When al-Qaida operatives are calling into or out of our country, we need to know who they are calling, why they are calling, and what they are planning,” he said. An audio link to the president’s remarks is available on the White House Web site.

Following is the transcript:

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
Saturday, September 16, 2006

RADIO ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT TO THE NATION

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. On Monday, I visited New York, Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon to attend memorials marking the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. It was an emotional day for me and for our country. On that day, we remembered those who lost their lives, and we paid tribute to those who gave their lives so that others might live. We rededicated ourselves to protecting the American people from another attack.

Next week, I will return to New York, where I will address the United Nations General Assembly. I look forward to talking to the world leaders gathered there about our obligation to defend civilization, and how we must work together to support the forces of freedom and moderation throughout the Middle East.

As we work with the international community to defeat the terrorists and extremists, we must also provide our military and intelligence professionals the tools they need to keep our country safe. Congress is considering two vital pieces of legislation to help us do just that. My Administration is working closely with members of both parties to pass these bills.

The first bill would allow us to use military commissions to try suspected terrorists for war crimes. We need this legislation because the Supreme Court has ruled that military commissions must be explicitly authorized by Congress.

I recently announced that 14 suspected terrorists, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the man believed to be the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, had been transferred to Guantanamo Bay. As soon as Congress acts to authorize the military commissions I have proposed, the men our intelligence agencies believe helped orchestrate the deaths of nearly 3,000 Americans on September the 11th, 2001, can face justice.

This bill will also provide clear rules for our personnel involved in detaining and questioning captured terrorists. The information the Central Intelligence Agency has obtained by questioning men like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has helped disrupt terrorist plots, including planned strikes inside the United States and on a U.S. Marine base in East Africa, an American consulate in Pakistan, and Britain’s Heathrow Airport. This CIA program has saved American lives, and the lives of people in other countries.

Unfortunately, the recent Supreme Court decision put the future of this program in question, and we need this legislation to save it. There is debate about the specific proposals in this bill, and my Administration will work with Congress to find common ground. I have one test for this legislation: The intelligence community must be able to tell me that the bill Congress sends to my desk will allow this vital program to continue.

The second bill before Congress would modernize our electronic surveillance laws and provide additional authority for the terrorist surveillance program. I authorized the National Security Agency to operate this vital program in response to the 9/11 attacks. It allows us to quickly monitor terrorist communications between someone overseas and someone in America. It has helped detect and prevent terrorist attacks on our own country. The principle behind this program is clear: When al Qaeda operatives are calling into or out of our country, we need to know who they are calling, why they are calling, and what they are planning.

Both these bills are essential to winning the war on terror. So we will work with legislators from both sides of the aisle to get them passed. By passing these critical bills, we will bring terrorists to justice, continue collecting vital intelligence from captured terrorists in a lawful way, and monitor terrorist communications, so we can stop new attacks on our nation.

Thank you for listening.

BUSH CALLS FOR U.N. FORCE TO ENTER SUDAN, STOP GENOCIDE

Also says Iran should not be allowed to “wait out” the international community

By Stephen Kaufman
Washington File White House Correspondent

Washington -- President Bush called on the United Nations to take “robust action” in Sudan and deploy a peacekeeping force to provide security in the troubled Darfur regions.

The United Nations’ lack of action against the genocide in Darfur has been a source of frustration for him and other Americans, the president said during a September 15 press conference at the White House.

Bush said there are “other alternatives” to continuing to wait for the Sudanese government to invite the peacekeepers into the country, such as “passing a resolution saying we’re coming in with a U.N. force in order to save lives.”

“I’m frustrated with the United Nations in regards to Darfur,” Bush said. “I have said and this government has said there’s genocide taking place in the Sudan, and it breaks our collective hearts to know that.”

The president said the best way to solve the crisis is to have both a political and a security track in the country, and said he had suggested that NATO provide support and logistics help for the U.N. force.

However, he said, the United Nations “hasn’t acted,” and added, “I can understand why those who are concerned about Darfur are frustrated. I am.”

Bush said he was proud of U.S. humanitarian efforts in Sudan. “We provided by far the vast majority of food and aid,” but said he is troubled by reports of escalating violence. “I can understand the desperation people feel for women being pulled out of these refugee centers and raped. And now is the time for the U.N. to act,” he said.

For additional information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency.

Looking ahead to the opening of the 61st U.N. General Assembly in New York, Bush said he would be addressing the gathering of international leaders to talk about “our obligation to defend civilization and liberty, to support the forces of freedom and moderation throughout the Middle East.”

The president also said the United Nations needs better management structures and accountability and he hopes the organization “would support my call to end tyranny in the 21st century.”

“I’m going to have a strong message, one that’s ... based upon hope and my belief that the civilized world must stand with moderate reformist-minded people and help them realize their dreams. I believe that’s the call of the 21st century,” he said.

Turning to Iran, Bush said there continues to be a “common” consensus against the country developing nuclear weapons and that he would warn U.N. member states against allowing the Iranian government to stall in its talks with the international community over the issue.

“[W]e need to move the process, and they need to understand we’re firm in our commitment. And if they try to drag their feet or, you know, get us to look the other way ... we won’t do that,” he said. “[W]e’re firmly committed in our desire to send a common signal to the Iranian regime.”

The president also took questions on his plan to define U.S. obligations under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. He said any legislation passed by Congress must ensure intelligence officers and others conducting the CIA’s interrogation program “have no doubt that what they’re doing is legal.”

“We’re trying to set high standards, not ambiguous standards,” Bush said.

A transcript of the president’s press conference is available on the White House Web site.

UNITED STATES PROMOTES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR ALL, RICE SAYS

2006 report examines 197 countries’ commitment to religious freedom

By Michelle Austein
Washington File Staff Writer

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice introduces the State Department’s 2006 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom at a press conference in Washington, D.C., September 15, 2006. (State Department photo/Mike Gross)

Secretary Rice introduces the State Department’s 2006 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom. (State Dept. photo/Mike Gross) Washington – “The United States seeks to promote religious freedom and tolerance and build a more peaceful world for the peoples of all faiths,” Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said at the release of the International Religious Freedom Report September 15.

The U.S. Department of State released the eighth annual report to Congress September 15. The 2006 report examines 197 countries’ commitment to advancing religious freedom.

The United States hopes the report will serve as a resource for those who share concerns about religious freedom, Rice said. “We also hope that it will serve as a source of encouragement to those whose plight is documented in the report and whose right to believe and practice and worship as they choose is still denied by their governments.”

Events over the past year, including the incidents surrounding the printing of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in European newspapers, “have shown the need to go beyond the protection of religious freedom in law to a concerted effort to create the conditions for harmony, mutual understanding and respect within our societies,” said Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom John Hanford.

Many governments are taking important steps to improve religious freedom, according to Hanford. For example, in Afghanistan the government is seeking to uphold constitutional guarantees of religious freedom despite a long-standing culture of intolerance. In Turkmenistan, additional religious groups have been able to obtain legal status.

The report also documents governments that routinely suppress religious freedom, including those of Eritrea and China, which use repressive registration laws as a means of restricting nonapproved religions or outlaw certain faiths entirely, Hanford said. In particular, Hanford said, Uzbekistan has further tightened its laws on religion, and congregations have been harassed and deregistered. Some Muslims in that nation have been arrested inappropriately, Hanford added. The fifth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks was a reminder that “the entire world is threatened by the extremist ideology of hate and bigotry and religious intolerance,” Rice said.

“Religious freedom is deeply rooted in our principals and our history as a nation. And it is now integral to our efforts to combat terrorism and the ideology of hatred that fuels it,” Rice said.

TRADE DISPUTE PANEL SOUGHT ON AUTO PARTS EXPORTS TO CHINA

Chinese charges on imported parts violate WTO agreement, United States says

By Peggy B. Hu
Washington File Staff Writer

U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab (file photo - © AP Images) Washington -- The United States, the European Union (EU) and Canada are requesting the World Trade Organization (WTO) establish a dispute settlement panel regarding China's treatment of imported auto parts, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab announced in a September 15 press release.

According to a USTR press release, China is imposing charges that “unfairly discriminate against imported auto parts and discourage automobile manufacturers in China from using imported auto parts in the assembly of vehicles.”

Under China's regulations governing the import of auto parts, all vehicle manufacturers in China that use imported parts must register with China's Customs Administration and provide specific information about each vehicle assembled, including a list of the imported and domestic parts to be used and the value and supplier of each part. If the number or value of imported parts in an assembled vehicle exceeds specified thresholds, the regulations assess each of the imported parts a charge equal to the tariff on complete automobiles (typically 25 percent) rather than the tariff applicable to auto parts (typically 10 percent).

“The United States believes that these charges are inconsistent with China's WTO obligations,” the USTR said. The United States and the EU requested WTO dispute settlement consultations on the issue March 30.

The United States, Canada, and the EU subsequently held joint consultations with China in Geneva May 11 and 12. Australia, Japan and Mexico -- which also export auto parts to China -- participated in the consultations as third parties.

“Working together with Canada and the EU, we have tried to resolve this issue through consultations as we always prefer to negotiate rather than litigate, but China has demonstrated no willingness to remove its unfair charges,” Schwab said. “While we remain open to settling this dispute, China's current stance leaves us no choice but to proceed with our WTO case. We are committed to providing a level playing field for U.S. exporters to China and, as we have made clear, we will not hesitate to pursue dispute settlement if necessary,” she said.

The full text of the press release is available at the USTR's Web site. Additional information on the WTO's dispute settlement process and current cases is available on the WTO Web site.

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